

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05 AID-05 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /099 W

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P R 220955Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2274

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY DARESSALAAM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 1479

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, RH, BC

SUBJECT: BOTSWANA REFUGEE REPORT: ON REASONS FOR INCREASED REFUGEE  
FLIGHT FROM RHODESIA

1. IN MAY 19 MEETING WITH EMBOFF, SPECIAL BRANCH OFFICER  
A.C. HIRSCHFELD SAID THERE WERE TWO LIKELY EXPLANATIONS FOR  
THE SHARP INCREASE IN NUMBERS OF RHODESIAN REFUGEES ENTERING  
BOTSWANA, BOTH RELATED TO THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT: (A) CON-  
SIDERABLE STEP-UP OF ZAPU RECRUITMENT AND EXFILTRATION EFFORTS  
IN A PROPAGANDA EXERCISE TO SHOW THAT ZIMBABWEANS WERE VOTING  
AGAINST THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT BY FLEEING THE COUNTRY; AND  
(B) THAT EXPANDING EXODUS OF RHODESIANS, THE OVERWHELMING  
MAJORITY OF WHOM BELONG TO THE MINORITY NDEBELE AND KALANGA  
TRIBES, REFLECTS THEIR ANTICIPATION OF A BLODDY CIVIL  
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WAR TO INCLUDE PERSECUTION OF MINORITIES CARRIED OUT BY  
A SHONA-DOMINATED INTERNAL SETTLEMENT GOVERNMENT AND  
SECURITY FORCE. HOWEVER, HIRSCHFELD SAID GOB HAD NO  
SPECIFIC EVIDENCE THAT RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES ARE  
MORE REPRESSIVE IN NDEBELE AREA OR THAT THEIR BEHAVIOR  
HAS SIGNIFICANTLY CHANGED IN RECENT MONTHS.

2. OF THE TWO EXPLANATIONS GIVEN ABOVE, HIRSCHFELD PUT MORE EMPHASIS ON THE SECOND. HE SAID THAT ALL THE REFUGEES, WHETHER OR NOT THEY HAD FLED IN ORDER TO FIGHT THE SMITH GOVERNMENT, HAD IN COMMON "A FEAR OF THE FUTURE".

3. WHEN ASKED WHETHER IT WAS LIKELY THAT THE REFUGEES WOULD BE EVENTUALLY ATTRACTED BACK TO RHODESIA UNDER THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AMNESTY, HIRSCHFELD NOTED THAT THE SITHOLE ELEMENT HAD ALREADY RETURNED (SEE GOABORONE 1445) AND SPECULATED THAT MUZOREWA ADHERENTS MIGHT ALSO RETURN IF GIVEN GO-AHEAD BY THE BISHOP. NEVERTHELESS, THE GOB HAD AS YET DETECTED NO GROUNDSWELL FOR REPARTIATION AMONG THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF REFUGEES, WHO ARE BOTH NDEBELE AND ZAPU. HE SAID THE GOB WOULD OF COURSE ASSIST ANYONE TO RETURN WHO WISHED TO DO SO.

4. AT THAT MOMENT, HIRSCHFELD RECEIVED TELEPHONE REPORT THAT COMBINED POPULATION OF RHODESIAN REFUGEE CAMPS IN BOTSWANA HAD REACHED 9,600 FOR MAY 19TH. WHEN EMBOFF NOTED THAT NUMBERS WERE ALREADY NEARLY HALF THE ESTIMATED FIGURE OF 20,000 ANTICIPATED BY END OF 1978, HIRSCHFELD SIGHED IN ANGUISH: "WHERE CAN WE PUT THEM ALL?"

5. COMMENT: WHATEVER THE OTHER REASONS FOR FLIGHT, IT APPEARS THAT REFUGEES HAVE IN COMMON A GREAT FEAR OF IMPENDING DISASTER AND THAT THIS FEAR IS TIED IN SIGNIFICANT MEASURE TO THE SPECTOR OF AN INTERNAL SETTLEMENT GOVERNMENT DOMINATED NOT ONLY BY SMITH, BUT BY THE FEARED SHONA MAJORITY. THIS CONCLUSION IS SUPPORTED BOTH BY THE HISTORY OF SHONA-NDEBELE RIVALRY AND BY THE FACT THAT INCREASINGLY LARGE PROPORTION OF REFUGEES DO NOT COME TO BOTSWANA SUBSEQUENTLY TO TAKE UP ARMS, BUT ARE WOMEN AND CHILDREN NON-COMBATANTS.

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SICANT MEASURE TO THE SPECTOR OF AN INTERNAL SETTLEMENT GOVERNMENT DOMINATED NOT ONLY BY SMITH, BUT BY THE FEARED SHONA MAJORITY. THIS CONCLUSION IS SUPPORTED BOTH BY THE HISTORY OF SHONA-NDEBELE RIVALRY AND BY THE FACT THAT INCREASINGLY LARGE PROPORTION OF REFUGEES DO NOT COME TO BOTSWANA SUBSEQUENTLY TO TAKE UP ARMS, BUT ARE WOMEN AND CHILDREN NON-COMBATANTS.

6. GIVEN THE ABOVE, WE GUESS THE NDEBELE WILL REMAIN IN BOTSWANA AND CONTINUE TO FLEE RHODESIA UNTIL THEY CAN RETURN TO A ZIMBABWEAN GOVERNMENT WHICH THEY BELIEVE WILL SAFEGUARD THEIR LIVES. IF THIS IS THE CASE, EVEN A SUCCESSFUL INTERNAL SETTLEMENT ALONG PRESENT SALISBURY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE LINES WILL CONTINUE TO CREATE SOUTHERN AFRICAN INSTABILITY BY LEADING TO THE EXODUS OF ENCLAVES OF THE NDEBELE TO ZAMBIA AND BOTSWANA. IN OUR ENUMERATION OF REASONS FOR SUPPORTING AN ALL-PARTIES CONFERENCE, WE MIGHT CONSIDER ADDING (AT LEAST IN PRIVATE DISCUSSION) THAT ONLY THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL THE PARTIES IN PROCESS OF FORMING A ZIMBABWEAN GOVERNMENT CAN GAIN THE CONFIDENCE OF ALL OF RHODESIA'S MINORITY PEOPLES (NOT ONLY THE WHITES) AND SOLVE THE NDEBELE REFUGEE PROBLEM.

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## Message Attributes

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